



GrowJobsCT

MANUFACTURING MAKES CT'S FUTURE

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Testimony of John Harrity
Director, GrowJobsCT

Regarding Proposed Bill:

SB 619 – AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FUTURES COMMISSION.

Commerce Committee
February 19, 2013

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, members of the committee: my name is John Harrity. I serve as Director of GrowJobsCT, a coalition of business, labor and community groups, along with elected officials, that focuses on the need to sustain and expand manufacturing jobs in the state of Connecticut.

I am here to speak in support of Senate Bill 619 – AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FUTURES COMMISSION.

I am also President of the Connecticut State Council of Machinists, which has endorsed this bill. In addition, I serve as co-convenor of the Advanced Manufacturing Working Group of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission. I am not speaking here on behalf of the working group or the commission, but that work does inform my opinion of the proposal.

In brief, I would say that much of the information and analysis called for by this proposal is already in process within the framework of the Advanced Manufacturing working group, as well as the state's Departments of Labor and Economic and Community Development. The analysis of the current state of manufacturing and Connecticut's workforce, as well as the future workforce needs, are tasks we are now either undertaking or have on our agenda.

But there is one task that the Futures Commission can tackle that would be difficult for the Advanced Manufacturing working group to take on. That is the issue of how to sustain manufacturing in our state beyond that funded by military procurements, a process often referred to as economic conversion.

Machinists Union members, like all Connecticut manufacturing workers, are proud to serve our nation making products for our national defense. But the ongoing sequestration debate, and other changes in government procurement (like the cancellation of the F-22 fighter jet), teach us that defense spending by itself is simply not secure.

There are those who argue in favor of cutting the military budget. Invariably the rest of the argument is that the funds saved could be used to repair our infrastructure, expand education, improve health care, etc.

But these are not jobs that manufacturing workers are going to perform. Cut the defense budget right now and thousands of Connecticut manufacturing workers would be affected. What would these workers do? What would they make? How would we maintain our historic, and still significant manufacturing base?

These are questions the Futures Commission can and should address. This effort should involve input from manufacturers, manufacturing workers, experts on economic development and the community. The Futures Commission should have the authority and resources to seriously investigate this important question, for the future of all of us in Connecticut.

Thank you.

John Harrity